

VENEZUELAN REFUGEES & MIGRANTS IN THE REGION



EXPLANATORY NOTE

VENEZUELAN REFUGEE AND MIGRANT FIGURES UPDATE - NOVEMBER 2021

Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the world: **6.04 M**

Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean: **4.99 M**

Context

Starting in March 2020, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted measures to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, including border closures and movement restrictions, which considerably limited the regular flow of refugees and migrants.

As a result, in 2021, we have seen a considerable increase of irregular flows requiring Governments and R4V actors to adapt their responses to the protection, humanitarian and integration needs, including through additional tools to include refugees and migrants from Venezuela in irregular situations in their population figure updates for statistical purposes, and for extending much required assistance.

Over the past year, refugees and migrants from Venezuela have become even more vulnerable, including because of the loss of their already limited social and economic support to cover basic needs, especially in vital areas such as shelter, food, protection and healthcare. The severe impact of the current situation has caused some to consider returning to their home country, including through initiatives supported by the Government of Venezuela¹.

For those on the move and in densely populated areas, physical distancing measures became virtually impossible to implement which has led to additional stigma by host communities, including negative perceptions associated with a fear of the spread of the virus.

In the context of the development of the comprehensive Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for 2022, the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) has been actively coordinating with governments across the region. In addition to ensuring that their priorities and planning projections are taken into account, these consultations included the development of accurate figures of refugees and migrants from Venezuela currently in their countries.

What is the rationale behind the increase in the recent number of refugees/migrants from Venezuela?

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, governments in the region have implemented measures to curb the spread of the pandemic, such as movement restrictions, borders closures and physical distancing. While such measures could be expected to result in a decrease in the mobility of Venezuelans within and between countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the November update of population figures of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region, reflects increases in some countries, based on the information provided by the authorities of the concerned governments.

In November 2021, the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela outside their country amounted to 6.04 million, an increase of 371,016 when compared with the September update on R4V.info. This does not mean that 371,016 persons left Venezuela in the last two months. Rather, a number of governments have recently updated their figures in the context of the RMRP 2022 planning exercise and corresponding consultations. Specifically, as of October 2021, the authorities of Peru, Mexico and Ecuador reviewed existing methodologies which take into account Venezuelans who are in an irregular situation.

1. According to Migración Colombia and the Brazilian Federal Police, since March 2020, almost 150 thousand Venezuelans returned, at least temporarily, to their home country.



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The efforts to include Venezuelans in irregular situations more accurately in the population figures in the aforementioned countries is considered a positive step that not only leads to more precise planning by humanitarian partners, but also serves to provide a more transparent and inclusive reflection of the overall situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

Colombia: The increase in the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Colombia (+99,463) follows an update coming from Migration Colombia's database. The change observed since the latest population update (which was reported in March 2021 and accounts for data until January 2021) reflects a gradual increase in population figures between January to August 2021. Despite border closures during that period, refugees and migrants from Venezuela have continued entering and re-entering the Colombian territory through irregular border crossings.

Peru: The significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Peru (+236,494) reflects a large number of irregular entries via the country's northern border during the year, as well as a change in the methodology by the National Superintendency of Migration (SNM) in Peru to count irregular entries. This adaptation by the government benefits from data from the ongoing regularization process, which has so far pre-registered some 360,000 refugees and migrants (including 230,000, previously in an irregular situation). The change observed since the last population update (reported in April 2021 and accounting for data until December 2020) also takes into account retroactive changes from January to September 2021.

Ecuador: The increase in the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Ecuador (+57,842) is based on a methodological update. The revised methodology now takes into account the cumulative migratory balance of regular inflows and outflows of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and an estimate of the cumulative irregular migratory balance based on an agreed Border Monitoring and Population Profiling System. Rather than reflecting a sudden increase from one month to another, the change observed since the last population update (reported in August 2021 and accounting for data until June 2021), takes into account methodological improvements made to better account for populations in irregular situations in the country.

Mexico: The decrease in the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Mexico (-19,247) is based on a change in methodology used by the National Migration Institute (INM), which now considers the sum of the population with a regular status (shared by the Migration Policy Unit (UPM)), those whose visas expired and are therefore considered as in an irregular situation, and new arrivals (Venezuelans holding a Multiple Migratory Form - FMM). The change observed since the last population update (reported in May 2021 and accounting for data until December 2020) takes into account retroactive changes from January to July 2021. It also accounts for populations in irregular situations that were already present in the country. It therefore does not represent a regular monthly increase.

How are these figures calculated?

Population figures reported by the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for refugees and migrants from Venezuela (R4V) reflect the official totals provided by respective host governments throughout the region. Depending on the country, this is comprised of revising and adding the available figures from different registration, asylum and other forms of residence systems that capture the numbers of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. It does not necessarily imply individual identification, nor registration of each individual, and may include a degree of estimation, as per each government's statistical data processing methodology. In some countries, authorities may use the migratory balance, i.e. the difference between regular entries and exits to arrive at the total number of refugees and migrants in their country. Many government sources do not account for



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Venezuelans without a regular status, which is why the total number of Venezuelans is likely to be higher than the officially reported figures.

What about Venezuelans entering countries in an irregular manner?

It is important to note that the officially reported population figures largely refer to regular movements (with some notable exceptions, as noted above). It is assumed that if all Venezuelan refugees and migrants in irregular situations were considered, the total number in the region could be higher than 4.99 million.